

Towards Appreciating Myatt's Philosophy Of Pathei-Mathos



Visiting A Catholic Church, 1995

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Abstract

We ask why David Myatt's mystical philosophy of pathei-mathos is unappreciated and why old unproven allegations and rumours about him are still propagated today.

We suggest it may be (i) because in Myatt's philosophy empathy and personal honour lead us away from the Judeo-Christian illusion of causal abstractions (a naming) and a dialectic of opposites based on such naming with the inevitable apocalyptic eschatology; and (ii) because his philosophy presents a modern and rational paganism based on Greco-Roman values and is therefore seen by certain antifascists as belonging to a new and emerging and dangerous "right-wing" milieu in which ancestral (native and pagan) European culture and a tradition of personal honour are central.

That David Myatt's mystical philosophy of pathei-mathos {1} is unappreciated today except by a few sagacious individuals is understandable given Myatt's extremist past – three decades (1968-1998) as a neo-nazi activist and ideologue, and almost a decade (1998-2008) as a supporter and ideologue of Muslim Jihad – which led to unproven allegations about him such as "it's hard to take anything Myatt says at face value, so successfully has he enshrouded himself in self-contradictory disinformation", and that he has a "history of deception", which allegations or claims his critics never support or supported with probative evidence based on primary sources. {2}

Such allegations are still made today despite Myatt's voluminous post-2011 writings about his rejection of extremism. Writings such as his 2013 book *Understanding and Rejecting Extremism: A Very Strange Peregrination* {3} and collections of essays such as his *Religion, Empathy, and Pathei-Mathos: Essays and Letters Regarding Spirituality, Humility, and A Learning From Grief* {4}.

Which unproven allegations and their acceptance by many often politically-motivated individuals {5} may explain why there are no reasoned, or scholarly, critiques of, for example, Myatt's *Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God*, his 29 page monograph included in his book *Religion, Empathy, and Pathei-Mathos*. {4}

Good, Evil, Honour, and God

Which monograph is a relevant example of his writings about his philosophy of pathei-mathos, and in which monograph he compares the ontologies of Christianity, Islam, and the modern nation-state with the ontology he proposes for his own philosophy.

For example, after discussing the ontologies of Christianity, Islam, and the modern nation-state, he presents in Parts Four and Five his argument in favour of a personal ontology deriving from *pathei mathos*, as well as presenting his conclusions regarding the need to lead a tolerant, compassionate, honourable, way of life.

Thus in Part Four he writes that the aim is:

"to be in balance, in harmony, with Life; the balance that is love, compassion, humility, empathy, honour, tolerance, kindness, and *wu-wei*.

This, by its nature, is a personal answer and a personal choice; an alternative way that compliments and is respectful of other answers, other choices, and of other ways of dealing with issues such as the suffering that afflicts others, the harm that humans do so often inflict and have for so long inflicted upon others [...]

[There is] no need for dogma or too many words; no need for comparisons; no 'just cause' to excuse our behaviour. No mechanisms and no techniques to enable us to progress toward something because there is no need or requirement to progress toward what is not there to be attained. There is only a personal living in such a way that we try to be compassionate, empathic, loving, honourable, kind, tolerant, gentle, and humble. And this is essentially the wisdom, the insight, the way of living – *sans denotatum* – that thousands upon thousands of people over millennia have contributed to the culture of *pathei-mathos*, as well as the essence of the message which many if not all spiritual ways and religions, in their genesis, perhaps sought to reveal: the message of the health of love and of our need, as fallible beings often inclined toward the unbalance of hubris, for humility."

Interestingly, and in reference to Christianity, in his *The Way Of Jesus of Nazareth: A Question Of Hermeneutics?* he writes that what he has found when translating the Gospel of John

"is rather reminiscent of what individuals such as Julian of Norwich, George Fox, and William Penn wrote and said about Jesus and the spiritual way that the Gospels in particular revealed. This is the way of humility, of forgiveness, of love, of a personal appreciation of the divine, of the numinous; and a spiritual, interior, way somewhat different from supra-personal moralistic interpretations based on inflexible notions of 'sin' and thus on what is considered 'good' and what is considered 'evil'. A difference evident in many passages from the Gospel of John." {6}

In Part Five of *Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God* he explains the origins of his philosophy:

"Twenty years ago, someone whom I loved who loved me died, too young and having harmed no one. Died, leaving me bereft, if only for a while. For too soon my return to those hubriatic, selfish, suffering-causing, and extremist, ways of my pasts. As if, despite the grief, the pain of loss, I personally had learned nothing, except in such moments of such remembering that did not, unfortunately, impact too much upon my practicalities of life; at least until another bereavement, thirteen years later, came to shock, shake, betake me far from my arrogant presumptions about myself, about life, to thus lead, to so slowly lead, to me on a clear cold day yet again interiorly dwelling on what, if anything, is our human purpose of being here and why such bereavements, such early deaths, just seem so unjust, unfair."

Another relevant example is his *In Reply To Some Questions (2012)* in which he explains in greater detail the intent of his writings about extremism and about his philosophy of *πάθει μάθος* – the 'numinous way' – and that those writings

"have been written as expressions of my own feelings, experiences, and philosophical reflexions, with no particular audience in mind, save in many instance for a few personal friends. In effect, they document my interior struggles, my attempts to find solutions to certain philosophical problems, and my desire to understand the how and the why of my hubris, of my extremist decades, and thus to understand and acknowledge the mistakes of my past – to understand and acknowledge the suffering I caused – and understand the error of extremism itself [...]

What I hope to achieve by such writings is to communicate – or to attempt to communicate – some of my insights, some of my experiences, some of my solutions, and some of my conclusions, such as they are, and as personal and as fallible as they are, and dealing as they do with extremism, with an extremist life, and with the personal life of the hubriatic man I was [...]

My concern – and therefore that of the philosophy of *πάθει μάθος* – is with spiritual (numinous) and personal matters. With our own individual interior change and reformation; with the

perspective and insight that empathy and pathei-mathos provide: which is of personal virtues such as compassion, love, humility, empathy, πάθει μάθος, honour, and wu-wei, and thus with treating human beings as individuals [...]

My writings over the past few years have been personal, 'mystical', and philosophical, with the latter documenting the development and refinement of my 'numinous way' culminating in my moral philosophy of pathei-mathos which is concerned with individuals and how individuals might discover and learn to appreciate ἀρμονίη and δίκη and so move toward wisdom. So, what I wanted – rather, what I felt compelled to do following a personal tragedy – was to try and understand myself, my suffering-causing past; to try and discover what undermined ἀρμονίη and δίκη, and what ὕβρις was and what it caused and why." {7}

Is this as his politically orientated critics claim "disinformation and deceptive", or is it – like his *Understanding and Rejecting Extremism*, his *Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God*, and other such writings including his autobiography *Myngath* – a genuine expression of Enantiodromia, of the reformation of an individual? {8}

That Myatt's politically orientated critics have not penned reasoned, or scholarly, critiques of such Myattian works should be sufficient to answer that question.

A Modern Pagan Philosophy

One other reason why Myatt's mystical philosophy of pathei-mathos may be unappreciated today, and another possible reason why his politically motivated critics have not penned reasoned, or scholarly, critiques of that philosophy, is that his philosophy is, for many of those who have studied it, a modern pagan philosophy in the tradition of Greco-Roman philosophy.

In his 2019 autobiographical essay *An Indebtedness To Ancient Greek And Greco-Roman Culture* he explained that he uses some non-English terms mostly from Ancient Greek but occasionally from Latin,

"in the hope that such terms would not only be able to convey my meaning better than some easily mis-understood English term but also might be assimilated into the English language as philosophical terms either in their transliterated English form or in their Greek and Latin form.

Such terms might also reveal my indebtedness to Ancient Greek and Greco-Roman culture and how and why the philosophy of pathei-mathos is both a "transition from mythoi and anthropomorphic deities (theos and theoi) to an appreciation of the numinous sans denotatum and sans religion" and thus a return to individual insight and understanding over impersonal abstractions/ideations, over denotatum, and over religious and political dogma, with the Latin denotatum – used as an Anglicized term and which thus can be used to describe both singular and plural instances of denoting and naming – a useful example of my somewhat idiosyncratic methodology.

Thus and for example I used and use σοφόν instead of σοφός when the sense implied is not the usual "skilled", or "learned" or "wise" but rather what lies beyond and what was/is the genesis of what is presenced in a person as skill, or learning, or wisdom. I used and use σωφρονεῖν in preference to σωφροσύνη (sophrosyne) to suggest a fair and balanced personal judgement rather than the fairly modern English interpretation of sophrosyne as soundness of mind, moderation." {9}

In that essay he asks then answers a rhetorical question about using such Greek and Anglicized terms:

"Does my idiosyncratic use of Ancient Greek and Latin terms make this philosophy confusing, difficult to understand and difficult to appreciate? Perhaps. But since philosophia – φιλοσοφία – is, at least according to my fallible understanding, becoming a friend of σοφόν, and since such a personal friendship involves seeking to understand Being, beings, and Time, and since part of the ethos of the culture of the West – heir to Ancient Greek and Greco-Roman culture – is or at least was a personal and rational quest for understanding and knowledge, then perhaps some effort, as befits those of noble physis who appreciate and who may seek to presence καλὸς κάγαθός, is only to be expected."

In his 2017 monograph *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* he explains the context and meaning of the term καλὸς κάγαθός, writing that

"we are, ontologically, emanations of and presence Being, and are a connexion to the cosmos – to other presencings of Being – through, in terms of epistemology, not only reason (λόγος),

perceivance (νοῦς) and wordless-awareness (συμπάθεια, empathy) but also through τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ καλόν, and ἀρετὴ, through the beautiful and the well-balanced, the valourous and honourable, and those who possess arête, all of which are combined in one Greek phrase: καλὸς κἀγαθός, which means those who conduct themselves in a gentlemanly or lady-like manner and who thus manifest – because of their innate physis or through pathei-mathos or through a certain type of education or learning – nobility of character. Which Greek phrase expresses the ethics, the high personal standards, of the ancient paganus weltanschauung we have been discussing." {10}

In his *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* and in his other 2017 monograph *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* {11} he writes of the difference between classical paganism and revealed religions such as Christianity. That there is, in his view, a fundamental

"difference between a religious apprehension of the numinous – based on received and venerated texts, on exegesis – and the paganus apprehension of the numinous as manifest in Greco-Roman culture, based as it is on an individual, and an intuitive, empathic and thus wordless, apprehension of the numinous." {12}

This "empathic apprehension of the numinous" is at the core of Myatt's philosophy of pathei-mathos. In his *Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos* he writes that empathy is a means by which we can

"understand both φύσις and Πόλεμος, and thus apprehend Being as Being, and the nature of beings – and in particular the nature of our being, as mortals. For empathy reveals to us the acausality of Being and thus how the process of abstraction, involving as it does an imposition of causality and separation upon beings (and the ideation) implicit on opposites and dialectic), is a covering-up of Being." {13}

In *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, he writes that

"Greco-Roman culture is inextricably bound to the culture of the West and formed the basis for the European Renaissance that emerged in the 14th century, one aspect of which was a widespread appreciation of classical Art, of classical literature, and of texts such as the Corpus Hermeticum."

Which why his translations of eight tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum, and of other Greek texts,

"when studied together enable us to appreciate and understand the classical, pagan, ethos and thence the ethos of the West itself [...] What Myatt does in his translations [of the Corpus Hermeticum] is paint a picture of classical – and of Hellenic – culture and especially of Hellenic mysticism; a culture and a mysticism which is pagan and based on individuals, on tangible things such as honesty, and not on moralistic and religious and impersonal abstractions. That is, he reveals the Greco-Roman ethos – the pagan ethos – underlying the hermetic texts and which is in contrast to that of Christianity with its later, medieval and Puritanical, impersonal moralizing." {14}

Which understanding of the ethos of the West, sans Christianity, the politically orientated individuals and organizations who are vociferous critics of Myatt most probably view as heresy, as evidence that Myatt's philosophy of pathei-mathos undermines the Judeo-Christian culture and tradition that still forms the basis of many Western nation-states, and evidence also of how Myatt's philosophy may aid those who champion a particular and pagan interpretation of Western culture.

As one commentator noted, Western culture is

"exemplified according to Myatt by καλὸς κἀγαθός. That is, by those who "conduct themselves in a gentlemanly or lady-like manner and who thus manifest – because of their innate physis or through pathei-mathos or through a certain type of education or learning – nobility of character," and which nobility of character is manifest in "the virtues of personal honour and manners" and which Western culture was also – according to Myatt and contra modern 'political correctness' – manifest in a natural and necessary aristocracy composed of those who possess nobility of character and who thus exemplify καλὸς κἀγαθός." {14}

This interpretation of Western culture is, as Myatt expresses it in his *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, also

" (i) an (often wordless) awareness of ourselves as a fallible mortal, as a microcosmic connexion to other mortals, to other life, to Nature, and to the Cosmos beyond our world, and (ii) a new civitas, and one not based on some abstractive law but on a spiritual and interior (and thus not

political) understanding and appreciation of our own Ancestral Culture and that of others; on our 'civic' duty to personally presence καλὸς κάγαθός and thus to act and to live in a noble way.

For the virtues of personal honour and manners, with their responsibilities, presence the fairness, the avoidance of hubris, the natural harmonious balance, the gender equality, the awareness and appreciation of the divine, that is the numinous."

Which "new civitas" – new communities, a new understanding of what being part of (a citizen of) such communities means; a new definition of freedom based on honour – strikes at the very foundations of the modern nation-state with its impersonal laws and in which modern nation-states where the 'law of personal honour' – one of the foundations of Myatt's philosophy {15} – if not outlawed is subject to often severe state-sanctioned restrictions.

As Myatt noted in his *Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God*,

"My own and only fallible answer to the question of how to deal with the suffering that blights this world therefore seems to be the answer of a personal honour. That is, for each of us to gently try to carry that necessary harmony, that balance, of δίκη, wordlessly within; to thus restrain ourselves from causing harm while being able, prepared, in the immediacy of the moment, to personally, physically, restrain – prevent – others when we chance upon such harm being done. This, to me, is Life in its wholesome natural fullness – as lived, presenced, by the brief, mortal, consciously

aware, emanations we are; mortal emanations capable of restraint, reason, culture, and reforming change; of learning from our pathei-mathos and that of others. My personal answer to personal questions, perplexion, and to grief and doubt. The answer which is to live in hope – even need – of a personal loyal love; to live with empathy, gentleness, humility, compassion, and yet with strength enough to do what should be done when, within the purview of our personal space, we meet with one or many causing suffering and harm, no thought then for the fragility of our own mortal life or even for personal consequences beyond the ἀρμονία we, in such honourable moments, are."

In an essay written in September 2014 he explained that

"personal honour – which presences the virtues of fairness, tolerance, compassion, humility, and εὐταξία – [is] (i) a natural intuitive (wordless) expression of the numinous ('the good', δίκη, συμπάθεια) and (ii) of both what the culture of pathei-mathos and the acausal-knowing of empathy reveal we should do (or incline us toward doing) in the immediacy of the personal moment when personally confronted by what is unfair, unjust, and extreme.

Of how such honour – by its and our φύσις – is and can only ever be personal, and thus cannot be extracted out from the 'living moment' and our participation in the moment." {16}

By expressing a new civitas based on the concept of personal honour and on the noble virtues of καλὸς κάγαθός, Myatt's rather unique philosophy, evolved as it has been by his *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* and his *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* monographs – might well be seen to be, according to the standards of the political status quo, as rather radical.

It might also become considered to be, or may already be considered to be, by some politically orientated individuals and organizations who profess to be "fighting extremism" – and who are still swayed by the Judeo-Christian illusion of causal abstractions and the dialectic of opposites – part of a new and emerging "right-wing" milieu in which ancestral (native and pagan) European culture and a tradition of personal honour are central. {11}

For, according to Myatt's philosophy, empathy and personal honour lead us away from the Judeo-Christian illusion of causal abstractions (a naming) and a dialectic of opposites based on such naming with the inevitable apocalyptic eschatology which engenders a real-world struggle or a war between a posited and a supra-personal, abstract, 'good' and 'evil'. An eschatology – struggle between a posited 'good' (us) and a posited 'evil' (our enemies) – which the modern nation-state has appropriated, as witness the propaganda against National Socialist Germany with its portrayal of The Third Reich as the 'evil' enemy who must be fought and defeated.

Myatt's philosophy leads us away from such abstractions, back toward the pagan insight of Greeks such as Heraclitus:

"Although this naming and expression [which I explain] exists, human beings tend to ignore it,

both before and after they have become aware of it. Yet even though, regarding such naming and expression, I have revealed details of how Physis has been cleaved asunder, some human beings are inexperienced concerning it, fumbling about with words and deeds, just as other human beings, be they interested or just forgetful, are unaware of what they have done." {17}

In chapter three of his *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos* Myatt provides not only the Greek text of two other fragments by or attributed to Heraclitus but also his own translations:

"Polemos our genesis, governing us all to bring forth some gods, some mortal beings with some unfettered yet others kept bound." Fragment 53

"All by genesis is appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] with beings bound together again by enantiodromia." Diogenes Laërtius, ix. 7.

In that chapter he writes that

"Empathy also reveals why the assumption that abstracted, ideated, opposites apply to or should apply to living beings – and that they thus can supply us with knowledge and understanding of living being – disrupts the natural balance, resulting in a loss of ἁρμονίη [harmony] and συμπάθεια and is therefore a manifestation of the error of ὕβρις."

In place of such abstracted, ideated, Judeo-Christian conflicting opposites there is in both Greco-Roman paganism, and in Myatt's philosophy, Summum Bonum. As Myatt notes in his *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, quoting the Roman philosopher Seneca,

"What is injurious to such a [pagan] harmonious balance is what is dishonourable, with τὸ ἀγαθὸν – Summum Bonum – thus understood as honestum, as what is honourable, noble: summum bonum est quod honestum est; et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt. Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, LXXI, 4.

"the greatest good is that which is honourable. Also – and you may wonder at this – only that which is honourable is good, with all other 'goods' simply false and deceitful."

For honestum is how hubris can be avoided and balance maintained, and is the essence of καλὸς κἀγαθός which presences the numinous, the divine, in and among mortals."

This rational pagan understanding is worlds away from the abstractions of the modern nation-state and makes the unproven allegations, and the rumours spread, about Myatt now and over the decades by politically orientated individuals and organizations with an agenda who profess to be "fighting extremism" seem to belong to a medieval world of heretics, hateful preachers, and zealous fanatics inspired by the prevalent Judeo-Christian culture and who seek to track down, to publicly shame, and to accuse their enemies – "witches" and "wizards" – of heresy.

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{1} For an overview of Myatt's philosophy refer to *The Mystic Philosophy Of David Myatt*. The third edition is available from <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2021/08/myatt-philosophy-third-edition.pdf>

{2} The quotation "it's hard to take anything Myatt says at face value, so successfully has he enshrouded himself in self-contradictory disinformation" is from a 2018 internet article, by someone using the pseudonym Dylan Miller, titled *Beyond The Iron Gates* which repeats popular antifascist tropes about Myatt without providing any evidential facts.

Examples of those tropes are provided in *Modern Tale Of An Antifascist Propagandist*, <https://concerningmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/09/a-modern-tale.pdf>

{3} A gratis open access pdf version is available at <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/10/david-myatt-rejecting-extremism.pdf>

{4} Available at <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/religion-and-empathy.pdf>

{5} One accusation, much repeated, is that Myatt is still a neo-nazi and as a consequence his post-2012 writings about rejecting extremism must be lies with his philosophy of pathei-mathos being a deception. An amusing example of the accusations made about Myatt is provided in *Social Media Fun And Games With David Myatt* at <https://archive.org/download/false-claims/media-false-claims.pdf>

{6} <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/09/30/the-way-of-jesus-of-nazareth/>

His translation of and extensive commentary on chapters 1-5 of the Gospel of John is available at <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/gospel-john-chapters1-5.pdf>

{7} *In Reply To Some Questions (2012)*, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/questions-for-dwm-2012/>

{8} Myatt explains what he means by Enantiodromia in the *Enantiodromia and The Reformation of The Individual* and *The Change of Enantiodromia* chapters of his book *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos* which is available as a gratis open access document at <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>

His autobiography *Myngath* is available as a gratis open access document at <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/david-myatt-myngath.pdf>

{9} <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2019/04/23/an-indebtedness-to-ancient-greek-and-greco-roman-culture/>

{10} *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/classical-paganism-v2-print.pdf>

{11} *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/tua-es-diaboli-ianua.pdf>

{12} *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, op.cit.

{13} <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>

{14} *Western Paganism And Hermeticism: Myatt And The Renaissance of Western Culture*, <https://concerningmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/09/myatt-paganism.pdf>

Myatt's translation of and commentary on tracts from the Corpus Hermeticum is available at <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf>

{15} See, for example the chapter *Honour In The Philosophy Of Pathei-Mathos* in *The Mystic Philosophy Of David Myatt*, op.cit.

{16} *The Way Of Pathei-Mathos – A Précis*. The essay is included in *One Vagabond In Exile From The Gods: Some Personal and Metaphysical Musings*. <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/dwmyatt-sarigthersa-v7.pdf>

{17} In regard to the European – the Western – tradition of personal honour see, for example, William Segar, *Booke of Honor & Armes*, published in 1590. The book is available at https://books.google.com/books?id=LII_AQAAMAAJ

{18} The translation of fragment 1 is by Myatt who in his *Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God* provides the Greek text:

τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπείροισιν ἐοίκασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγεῖμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅπως ἔχει· τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιοῦσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὐδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται